

# *The Centenary of the Augustinian Sisters in Natal*

## *Introduction*

31 October 1991 marks the centenary of the arrival in Natal of the first group of sisters of the Canonesses Regular Hospitallers of the Mercy of Jesus, better known as the Augustinian Sisters. During this hundred years the Augustinian Sisters have served the people of Natal through their sanatoria or private hospitals and through their homes for destitute or orphaned children.

The Augustinian sisters belong to an ancient Order that can be traced back to well before the thirteenth century. The name of the founder and the exact date of their foundation are not known, the archives of the congregation having been destroyed in the pillage of Dieppe in 1562. However in 1285 Pope Honoratius IV referred to religious who were already making solemn vows and serving the poor under the Rule of St Augustine.<sup>1</sup> The sisters take the usual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience as well as a vow to serve their fellow men. They are an enclosed congregation and live according to the Rule of St Augustine of Hippo, based on love of God and neighbour. The Order had its roots in Dieppe where the Hotel Dieu was established to care for the poor and sick and for pilgrims and travellers. The first group of Augustinian sisters left France in 1639 to work in Canada where they established hospitals, so the Natal sisters were part of a long missionary tradition.

Under Bishop Charles Jolivet, vicar apostolic of Natal from 1874 to 1903, there had been a considerable extension of Catholic institutions, especially in the field of education. He decided to bring a group of Augustinian sisters to Natal to open a private hospital in Durban partly because he believed that this would be a useful addition to the medical facilities and partly because he wanted to extend the influence of the Catholic Church in the traditional field of nursing and social work. Jolivet was born in the diocese of Quimper in Brittany and was well acquainted with the excellent hospitals run by the sisters there. As early as 1885 he began to negotiate with the Bishop of Quimper, under whose jurisdiction the sisters came. He also began to sound out public opinion in Natal as to the need for a private hospital and the amount of co-operation he could expect from the medical fraternity in Durban. He received support from Dr P. Prince and encouragement from the mayor B.W. Greenacre, with qualified support from a number of doctors who wanted to assess the quality of the facilities before committing themselves. This was sufficiently positive for the bishop to go ahead with his plans to look around for a suitable site.

Durban's Berea was relatively unpopulated in 1891, with plenty of empty sites available and Dr Prince and the bishop made a joint request to the Durban

Corporation for a site for a hospital, the cost of the buildings 'to be borne by a charitable lady'.<sup>2</sup> The response to the application was initially successful and the corporation agreed in principle to provide five or six acres for the project, valued at £250 to £300. However elections were due to be held and the final decision as to whether to grant the land was to be left to the incoming council. Jolivet, confident that the land would be made available, left for Europe in June 1891 to finalize the arrangements for bringing the sisters to Natal, a plan that had been in the air since 1885. This meant visiting the various convents that had agreed to release sisters for mission work, meeting the sisters who were to come to Natal and persuading the Bishop of Quimper, under whose jurisdiction the sisters came, to allow them to leave France.<sup>3</sup>

While Bishop Jolivet was in France the new council was elected in Durban and the question of the hospital site came up for discussion. Dr Prince and Father W.P. Murray were called to a meeting to explain their plans, particularly to the newly elected councillors who had not been present at the earlier meetings. The site that had been tentatively agreed upon was in Manning Road, next to the plot acquired in 1888 by the Methodist Church. William Palmer, a newly elected councillor, became the spokesman for the Methodists in safeguarding their interests in this matter.<sup>4</sup> At the same time a series of letters appeared in the local press objecting to the fund-raising appeals that were being made on behalf of the new hospital. The writer of one such letter, writing under the *nom de plume* 'Protestant Sentinel', maintained that if another hospital was needed then the government should provide the funds; if they were unwilling then the Protestants must wake up and raise money for their own hospital.<sup>5</sup> Anti-Catholic prejudice had declined considerably over the year since Bishop Allard arrived in 1852, but it tended to reappear in a limited form whenever any new project was proposed or any unusual event placed Catholics in the spotlight. It was in an attempt to break down these prejudices even further that Jolivet wished to bring nursing sisters to Durban, believing that their friendly and caring attitude to their patients as well as their nursing skills would together reverse the prejudices still remaining among some Protestants.

The Methodists who were planning their new church in Manning Road were also unhappy about having a Catholic institution so close to them, especially one that would inevitably increase traffic and thus noise. The original agreement, which the bishop had drawn up, permitted the building of a chapel for the use of hospital staff but when Father Murray requested that Catholic patients and families living in the area be permitted to attend services in the chapel, there was strong opposition inside and outside the council. After discussion the council decided that the land would still be made available but that no chapel might be built. On hearing this Bishop Jolivet replied, 'rather than accept such unreasonable conditions he would prefer to buy a piece of land . . . ' and the request to the council was withdrawn. In a letter to Father Kolbe written after his return, Jolivet explained what had caused him to cancel his application for land:

Now, judging from this you will think that the people of Natal and the town councillors in particular are a set of narrow-minded bigots; it is not so however. The people of Natal as a rule are generous and broad-minded . . . nevertheless there *are* bigots in Natal – the genus is to be found everywhere.

The decision to withdraw the request for a grant of land had a significant

effect on the plans that Jolivet had made for the Augustinian sisters and which now had to be radically changed. The hospital plan had to be postponed while a suitable site was found and the purchase completed and only after this could building plans be drawn up. In the meantime the sisters had to be accommodated and to be provided with the means to earn a living. Jolivet finally decided that the sisters should make a start at Estcourt where the Church owned property on which there was accommodation of a simple kind available.

### *The Augustinian Sisters leave France*

The sisters at Pont L'Abbe, in Brittany, received the long awaited news that their move to Natal had been approved on 21 July 1891, the formal agreements having been completed. The sisters were to embark at Dieppe in September under the direction of Mother Therese of Jesus, who was appointed superior.

Accounts written by the sisters at this time reveal their expectation and excitement. Most of them were young, few had been outside of Brittany and none had any real information about Natal apart from what Bishop Jolivet had told them about the Natal mission and the Zulu people. They soon became the centre of attention as they prepared to leave France for the 'foreign missions' from which they would probably never return.<sup>6</sup> Gifts of useful items for the missionary life ahead were presented to them wherever they went and added to the considerable amount of luggage that accompanied them to Natal.

The party of five from Pont L'Abbe said farewell at 3 a.m. on 8 September 1891, travelling by coach to Quimper and then by train to Auray. They were accompanied by their chaplain who saw to all the business affairs and the luggage. At Auray they were welcomed by the sisters at the convent where

the cloister was transformed into a garden of greenery and flowers; the community room and the refectory were beautifully decorated and welcoming songs had been composed for the occasion.<sup>7</sup>

From Auray they travelled to Rennes where their welcome was just as warm and generous and on the morning of 12 September they came to the Augustinian convent at Vitre where two sisters were to join them; their last visit was to Fougères where Sister St Marthe joined the group. After a short stay in Paris they proceeded to their motherhouse in Dieppe where they were to remain a week. At Dieppe

we severed the last threads joining us to our dear community when our devoted and kind chaplain left us . . . like another Raphael, his mission happily fulfilled, he said goodbye.<sup>8</sup>

It was at the Dieppe convent that Sister Claire, an English woman, quite unexpectedly volunteered to join the Natal group and was given permission by her superiors, bringing the party to nine. This was to make their lives much easier once they reached their destination since she was able to translate and interpret for her French colleagues and also could explain the customs and manners of the English colonists.

On 28 September 1891 the travellers met at the quay at Dieppe where

a large crowd of friendly people, several religious and nearly all the priests of Dieppe came to greet his Lordship and wish us all best . . . for our future mission. Shortly after the steamboat carried us away towards the English shore and soon it was a last look, a last goodbye to France, our beloved country.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the journey the sisters travelled as cloistered religious and saw none of the sights of Paris or of London.

The last stage of the journey began when the entire party of Bishop Jolivet, three priests belonging to the congregation of Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, to which the bishop also belonged, and nine Augustinian sisters boarded the *Inanda* on 29 September, the feast of St Michael. They set sail the following morning. The voyage passed without incident and for the sisters it was an adventure and a time for learning English under the help of Sister Claire. The highlight of the day was the evening recreation period when the whole party would meet on deck and the captain remarked 'I would never have believed that religious people were so cheerful, so happy'.<sup>10</sup> The gatherings ended with a hymn and prayers, with the bishop giving them his blessing before they all retired for the night.

### ***Arrival at Port Natal***

The *Inanda* arrived at Port Natal on the evening of 30 October 1891; a thanksgiving service was held on board for their safe arrival, followed by Mass and then the disembarkation began. Fathers Murray and Barret, superiors of Durban and Pietermaritzburg, came on board to greet the bishop and the new missionaries and then it was time to climb into the basket for the descent to the 'steamer' that was to carry them ashore. The sisters were full of hopeful expectations when they stepped ashore to start their missionary experience, after what had probably been the most exciting period of their lives.

As was the custom at the time when the bishop returned from overseas, a great deal of ceremonial took place. A deputation from the Catholic community came to congratulate him on a safe return, a coach belonging to the Portuguese consul awaited him with lackeys in full livery, and he entered the coach to drive to St Joseph's church in West Street. The remainder of his party and those who had come to the ship to meet Bishop Jolivet now entered one of the many coaches and went in procession to the church. All the Catholic clergy of Durban and Pietermaritzburg and dozens of altar boys came in procession to greet the bishop at the coach, while convent pupils dressed in white and carrying flowers waited at the church door. The church bells pealed, a welcoming hymn was sung by the children and flowers were strewn in the bishop's path while a large crowd was present in the church for a Te Deum, followed by Benediction. After this refreshments were served in the courtyard where an address of welcome was read and prominent citizens were present to congratulate Jolivet on a successful trip. A firework display ended the day. Since the following day was the feast of All Saints the celebrations continued and Sister Therese noted that Jolivet 'officiated [at High Mass] with pomp and splendour such as we were not expecting'.<sup>11</sup>

The first few days were spent with the Holy Family Sisters in Durban and then they accompanied the bishop and his party who travelled by train to Pietermaritzburg where the welcome home ceremonies were repeated, the military band providing the music. The sisters were welcomed by Mother St Leonide and offered the hospitality of the Holy Family Sisters in their Loop Street convent. In the evening they were invited by the bishop to see 'the illumination and hear the joyful music of the military band which had returned to serenade the bishop'.

### ***Settling in Estcourt***

After a few days in Pietermaritzburg the superior and two of the sisters went on

to Estcourt where their luggage had already arrived. Bishop Jolivet sent Father Louis Mathieu, an experienced missionary, to assist them with business matters and to establish the first Augustinian foundation in Natal. Here for the first time they were introduced to a small Natal village. They were met at the station by Mrs Cooke, wife of the storekeeper, and taken to the cottage that was to be the first convent. One room was set aside as a chapel and the sisters found

everything was poor but clean. A modest altar with a wooden crucifix and four glass candlesticks was all the ornamentation. A beautiful altar rail, the gift of a Catholic worker, formed the sanctuary, three school benches on either side replaced chairs. At the back of the room there was an old harmonium which could play only a few notes! That was all.<sup>12</sup>

Bishop Jolivet arrived a few days later and decided to convert the large stable on the property into a temporary church since there was very little money available and the structure was strong and in good condition. The result was a pleasant building, large enough for the few Catholics in Estcourt. The sisters, being of an enclosed order, were provided with a grille with a curtain to separate them from the congregation. The church was blessed by Bishop Jolivet in May 1892 and named Our Lady of All Graces after the monastery of that name in Carhaix in France.

The question now was how the sisters were to support themselves since there was no building suitable for a hospital and even when a building was erected there would be very few patients in such a small village. The only option was to open a school to serve Estcourt and district, offering limited boarding accommodation. The fact that the sisters with one exception did not speak English and that none was trained as a teacher were immediate obstacles but the Dominican Sisters of Newcastle sent one of their teaching sisters to help for



Pioneering days in Estcourt

(*Photograph: Author's collection*)

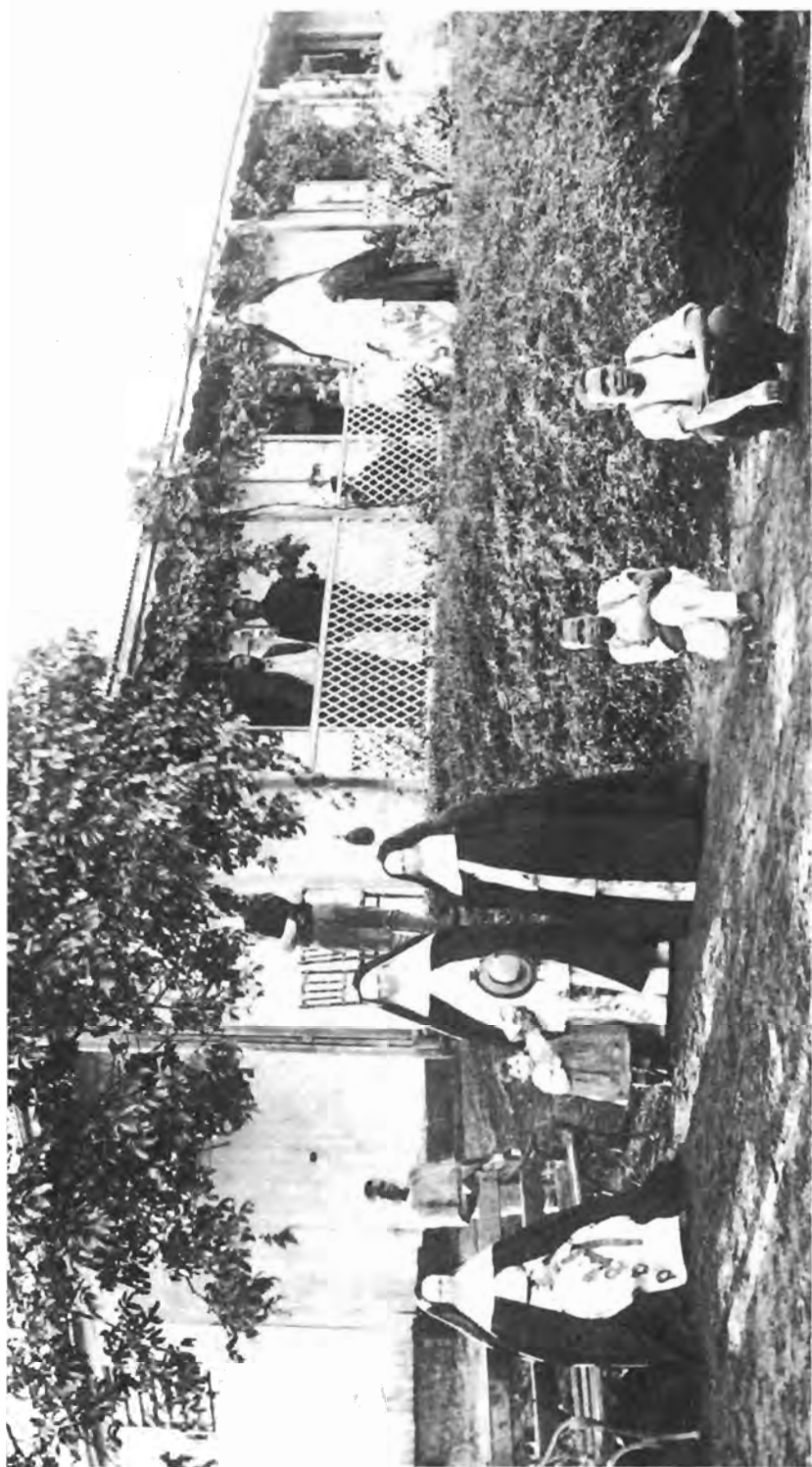
the first few months. Then Jolivet arranged for two young girls, Cecilia and Mathilde McLoughlin, both of whom were experienced teachers, to help with the running of the school.<sup>13</sup> It began in a very small way but numbers increased each year and the sisters were pleased with the progress made. The two young women eventually joined the Augustinian community as novices and became known as Sister St Charles and Sister St Augustine, the first South Africans to enter the Order. Eventually the former was elected superior in Durban and the latter superior in Ladysmith.

Meanwhile funds had to be found for the hospital building and the sisters were obliged to raise a loan in France to pay for building materials. From the well-established and secure background of a French religious foundation the sisters must have found Estcourt unbelievably poor and primitive. But what they found most extraordinary of all, after their experiences in Catholic Brittany, was the fact that there was no mission or missionary for 80 kms in any direction and, until the arrival of Father Le Bras, who was appointed chaplain to the sisters, there was no resident priest between Pietermaritzburg and Newcastle. The hospital was ready to accept patients in 1893, and indentured Indian patients at Government expense from 1894.

### *Progress in Durban*

Bishop Jolivet's main aim in bringing the Augustinian sisters to Natal was to open a private hospital in Durban and although his plans were delayed they were still uppermost in his mind. He quickly found a suitable nine acre site in Chelmsford Road and arranged for an architect to draw up plans for the hospital.<sup>14</sup> The property included three shabby cottages and a number of outbuildings and initially two of the cottages were to be converted into wards for 15 or 20 patients. It was generally felt that Jolivet had acquired the best site on the Berea with spectacular views of the sea and the bay. The grounds were described as being 'covered with all kinds of trees, orange, lemon, mango and great ornamental trees'.<sup>15</sup> The main criticism of the site was its distance from the town although some foresaw that the town would spread in that direction in the next ten years. The property was to become available in September 1892 and a tenth sister, Sister Rose de la Croix, arrived from France in August 1892 to help with the nursing and to be superior of the Durban sanatorium, the second foundation in Natal. Two choir sisters and a lay sister were transferred from Estcourt to work in the sanatorium, known as the Hotel Dieu of the Sacred Heart, and the first patient was admitted in December 1892. The sisters were accommodated in the third cottage, with several other sisters who had arrived from France and Canada to assist with the nursing, until the newly erected sanatorium building was ready for use in October 1894.

On the surface the history of the Durban sanatorium tells of extensions to buildings, improved facilities, new trained staff, success in nursing examinations and satisfied patients, but in reality the sanatorium was affected by the events taking place in Natal and in South Africa as a whole and there were many problems to be overcome, especially after 1902. Among the improvements were the installation of electric light in about 1900, the recognition of the nurses' training college in 1910, extended to allow secular nurses also to be trained there between 1912 and 1940, the opening of the new maternity block in 1950 and the reopening of the nurses' training school as a first class training school in 1954. The sisters also had to overcome serious financial difficulties during the long depression from 1904 to 1909 when patients were unable to pay for their treatment and went instead to the government hospitals, leaving



Founding Augustinian sisters in front of the first 'Sanatorium', Durban, in 1892.

(*Photograph: Author's collection*)

all the sanatoria to run at a loss. So bad was the financial position in 1907 that Bishop Delalle, who had succeeded Jolivet in 1904, seriously considered closing some of the sanatoria including the one at Durban, and did in fact close the Port Shepstone sanatorium run by the Kermaria Sisters.

It was not only the depression that caused problems for the sanatoria at this time. The medical profession had lost confidence in the nursing standards at the Durban sanatorium where the nursing techniques as well as some of the equipment were thought to be old fashioned, while the nurses lacked any formal training. Legislation for the compulsory registration of nurses began in the Cape in 1891 and spread to the rest of South Africa. The Augustinian sisters had received informal 'on the job' training in Brittany and had had wide nursing experience but this no longer satisfied the doctors at a time when medical practice was changing rapidly. Training of nurses remained informal in South Africa until 1910 but probationers were required to work in an approved institution with not less than twelve beds for two years and to be under the supervision of a medical practitioner for one year.<sup>16</sup> The first candidates passed the newly introduced nursing examination in 1901. Both the Durban and Pietermaritzburg sanatoria had the required number of beds but did not have a full time doctor to supervise student nurses, and hence they were not recognized. Faced with the declining support for the sanatorium, Bishop Delalle persuaded the superior of the Durban sanatorium to retire some of the older sisters, to reorganize the administration and to send the younger sisters to Johannesburg to be trained. When this was done the doctors began to support the sanatoria again and the financial position improved. The name St Augustine's Hospital was adopted at the request of the Nursing Council when the institution became a recognized training college, since the term sanatorium was associated with the treatment of patients with tuberculosis.

### ***The Ladysmith Foundation***

In 1894 the third foundation was established at Ladysmith when the Augustinian sisters were invited to establish a sanatorium in the town where there was no hospital. Seriously ill or injured persons had to be transported to Pietermaritzburg for treatment at great inconvenience and it seemed that a private nursing home on the same lines as the Estcourt sanatorium would solve many of the town's problems. The pioneer sisters, Mother Therese of Jesus and a companion, visited the town and were able to buy a ten hectare site on the top of the hill overlooking the town for only 2 500 francs (about R196). They rented a house, opened a school in it and supervised the building of the convent and sanatorium on the hilltop. In January 1896 three sisters left Estcourt to start the Ladysmith foundation with Mother Marie des Anges as superior. The buildings were almost ready for occupation at the beginning of 1897 and the first patients were admitted. At first the sanatorium was for white patients only but it was not long before the sick of all races were accepted.

Ladysmith and Estcourt were similar in many ways. Both were on the railway to the Transvaal and the towns had benefitted greatly from the presence of hundreds of construction workers over a number of years. Both had small white populations<sup>17</sup> and the completion of the railway line meant that there was a decline in population, felt particularly by traders. The problems encountered by the Augustinian sisters were related in that neither town was large enough to require a government as well as a private school and neither could support a private hospital without a government grant. In addition the Catholic population consisted of only three or four families and most of these



were poor.<sup>18</sup> The sisters had virtually no financial resources and it was not long before they began to realize that neither foundation was viable.

In October 1899 the South African War broke out and Natal was invaded. British forces withdrew to Ladysmith by the end of October and the convent buildings on the hill were an easy target for the Boer guns and were shelled regularly throughout the siege of Ladysmith. Despite the fact that the Red Cross flag was flying over the convent buildings they came under early attack and on 6 November 'after a projectile weighing 90 lbs exploded in the refectory, knocking down the walls and making an enormous breach in the floor of the corridor'<sup>19</sup> it was decided to evacuate the staff and patients, most of whom were wounded soldiers from the early battles. At first they were moved to the church hall and then to Intombi camp where they remained for the 118 days of the siege. From the camp the sisters could see 'Mbulwana hill on which the famous long Tom was placed and which 'we could see distinctly hurling missiles onto our dear convent'.<sup>20</sup> Intombi camp was about four miles from Ladysmith and here hundreds of wounded soldiers, civilians, prisoners-of-war and the hospital staff and patients were crowded into tents for nearly four months through the rainy season and with very little food. Typhoid fever broke out at the end of December and the sisters were called to assist in nursing the Natal volunteers in the army camp who were affected by the outbreak. Heat, flies, mud, toads and torrential rain made life miserable for everyone but particularly for the sick and there were many deaths, including Sister Martha and an Irish nursing sister, Sister O'Brien, who had joined the staff of the hospital just before the war broke out.

When the siege was lifted the sisters were allowed to return to their convent on the hill. They found the damage much more severe than they had expected, the grounds were littered with tents, horses and mules, wagons were everywhere and General Buller and his staff occupied all the habitable buildings that remained. Several of the sisters were ill and it was with relief that they received the instructions of Bishop Jolivet to leave Ladysmith and take the first available train to Durban. Here they spent their time on the Bluff recovering their health. When they returned to Ladysmith in June 1900 they were able to reopen the school but the sanatorium had been severely damaged and nothing could be done before repairs had been completed. The Invasions Losses Enquiry Commission reported that the damages were of a 'very extensive character, being one of the worst cases in town'.<sup>21</sup> The Commission allocated £419 for structural damages but for the sisters it was a matter of starting all over again especially as linen, china and equipment had disappeared, furniture had been damaged, windows broken and doors ripped off their hinges. The gardens were in ruins and horses had eaten the young trees and shrubs that the sisters had planted. It was not until September 1901 that the hospital was able to take patients again and for the worried sisters the Natal government's grant, made on the understanding that they would accept patients of all races, saved the day. By 1904, when the military expenditure had been drastically reduced, soldiers discharged and the population returned to pre-war levels or less, the school found itself with no pupils and there were very few patients in the sanatorium.

Economic conditions deteriorated all over South Africa at this time and the small towns did not escape. The Augustinian foundations at Ladysmith and Estcourt were particularly vulnerable because neither had had time to become established before the depression struck and neither was really viable in any case. The white population diminished as people left for the Witwatersrand,



The Augustinian community in the early days at Ladysmith, 1900.

(Photograph: Author's collection)

businesses failed and parents removed their children from the convent schools because they were unable to pay the fees, while both the sanatorium and the school had bad debts to cope with. Estcourt had an additional problem in that one of the two doctors in the town ran his own nursing home and did not support the sanatorium at all. Fortunately the Indian section was moderately successful.<sup>22</sup>

Eventually the depression lifted, the white population of the two towns increased, sisters were sent to be trained as nurses and the crisis was past.

### ***The Pietermaritzburg Sanatorium***

The fourth foundation was the Pietermaritzburg sanatorium established in 1898 after a group of doctors had approached Bishop Jolivet with a request for an institution similar to the Durban sanatorium.<sup>23</sup> Bishop Jolivet was closely associated with this venture, drawing some of the plans, assisting the sisters to raise the capital necessary for the building and appointing Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart as the first superior. The venture started off badly with the completion of the building delayed month after month while the worried sisters were paying interest on the loan of £8 000 at 6%. Eventually they decided to move into the incomplete building in April 1898 in the hope of hurrying the workmen into completing the construction. The first patient was admitted as soon as one bedroom was ready. At the same time Bishop Jolivet was summoned to France and was away for six months at a crucial stage. Thirteen patients were admitted in May despite numerous difficulties. Eventually the

building was completed, patients were admitted and doctors gave their support. Their first patients included a Zulu chief who arrived in an ox wagon with a large retinue, and the Prime Minister, Sir Henry Binns.

Economic depression hit the Pietermaritzburg sanatorium later than the others, reaching a climax between 1907 and 1915. Bishop Delalle believed that their problems were caused to a large extent by their refusal to take debtors to court<sup>24</sup> and also because they treated large numbers of poor people without charge. The Provincial Council provided a grant in 1913 which enabled the sisters to survive the crisis.

### ***Other service***

Apart from their nursing foundations, the sisters were concerned about the welfare of destitute children, especially coloured and Indian, from the time of their arrival in Natal. An orphanage was opened in one of the cottages on the Durban property in 1895, initially to care for the children of domestic workers. It remained there for many years until their number grew too large for the shabby cottage and the property known as St Philomena's orphanage in Malvern was bought for them in 1939. In 1976 the property was sold and St Philomena's was moved to Sydenham where the cottage system was introduced and the name changed to St Philomena's Anchor Village. In 1982 the Augustinian sisters withdrew, handing over control to the Archdiocese of Durban.<sup>25</sup>

In 1925 the sisters of the Durban community saw the need for a home for destitute Indian and coloured boys and obtained land in Mayville where they built St Theresa's home for boys. Initially they opened a school for Indian boys and another, St Peter Claver school, for black children living near the sanatorium. For about eight years they ran a small hospital for Indians living in Sydenham but this was closed when it was no longer needed by the community. St Theresa's church was erected as a parish church for Mayville and is now a chapel of ease for St Anne's parish, Sydenham. St Theresa's home is still in existence; the boys are now housed in modern cottages with trained housemothers to see to their needs.<sup>26</sup>

### ***Recent years***

The foundations at Estcourt, Ladysmith, Pietermaritzburg and Durban closed down one after the other after 1966. There were many reasons for this. The shortage of religious after Vatican II made it impossible to staff the schools and hospitals without the assistance of qualified lay people. In the case of the sanatoria, where medical advances made it necessary to update the theatre, laboratory and X-ray sections, the costs involved were unacceptably high. The Augustinian sisters realized that a private hospital was incapable of competing with the facilities of provincial and government hospitals unless they could regularly expend large sums on equipment in order to keep up to date. The Durban and Pietermaritzburg sanatoria were taken over by companies and are still in use as private institutions. The Estcourt sanatorium was closed and at Ladysmith the buildings were used for La Verna hospital, run by the Franciscan Minors.

At the present time Augustinian sisters are engaged in pastoral work in the Estcourt parish and district, they have a novitiate and small school at Nottingham Road, they run a clinic and maternity home at Pomeroy, as well as undertaking pastoral work among the poor of the district. They are also

engaged in mission work at various centres. Older sisters have established a community at Botha's Hill and old or ill sisters are looked after there. In 1972 the autonomous houses were joined together as the House of St Augustine.

Generations of Natalians have been associated with the Augustinian sisters in one way or another — as patients, or infants born in one of the sanatoria or as pupils at one of the schools or as children taken in and cared for by the sisters. Throughout their century of service they have shown remarkable resilience and faith that their problems would be overcome by prayer and perseverance. In recent years they have adapted to changing circumstances, moving into new fields to meet new demands. Natalians will surely wish them every success as they begin the next hundred years of service!

#### REFERENCES

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3. First Annal, written by the Foundress, Mother Therese of Jesus, 1893, p. 3.
4. Joy B. Brain. *Catholics in Natal II*, Durban, Archdiocese of Durban, 1982, pp. 28–32.
5. *Natal Advertiser*, 25 June 1891.
6. It was generally accepted by missionaries at the time that they would probably never return to their home country, particularly as regular overseas leave was not provided until recent times.
7. First Annal, p. 6.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.
13. Perennes, *Monseigneur Jolivet*, Priziac, Imprimerie de l'Orphelinat Saint-Michel, 1937, p. 123.
14. Jolivet's Journal, 30 November 1891.
15. First Annal, p. 24.
16. C. Searle. *The history of the Development of nursing in South Africa 1652–1960*, Cape Town, Struik, 1965, pp. 284–285.
17. The white population of Ladysmith was given as 2 123 in 1891 and Estcourt was somewhat smaller.
18. Joy B. Brain, *Catholics in Natal II*, pp. 48–49.
19. Annal written by Sister Marie des Anges, Ladysmith, 1900, p. 4.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
21. CSO 2926: Claims of associations, churches etc., schedule 1927 (NAD).
22. Delalle's Diary, 7 January 1911.
23. They were Doctors Currie, Ward, Gordon, Scott, Allen, Campbell-Watt, Buntine and Dumas.
24. Joy B. Brain, *Catholics in Natal II*, pp. 184–185.
25. *Augustinian Sisters of the Mercy of Jesus, Natal 1891–1991*, p. 20.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

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